

An Analysis of the Cohesion and Coherence of Students' Descriptive Writing
(Enni Erawati Saragih and Siti Nuraeni Septiani)

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COHESION AND COHERENCE OF STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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Abstract

This study was conducted to describe the cohesion and coherence of descriptive paragraphs written by the students of Senior High School in Bogor. To meet this purpose, 30 students were chosen as the participants of this study. The data were collected through administering writing task. The data analyzed qualitatively on the basis of Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion and analyzing coherence by Lautamatti's topical structure analysis theory of progression. The result showed that *reference* was the types of cohesive devices that highly used by the students to build cohesion in their descriptive paragraphs, followed by *conjunction*, *reiteration*, *ellipsis* and *collocation*, and *substitution*. The types of topical progression used by the students to build their descriptive writing were *parallel progression*, *sequential progression*, and *extended parallel progression*. The highly used of *parallel progression* indicates that the overall view of the topical progression of the students' descriptive texts followed a dominant use of *parallel progression*, realized by the repetition the/it in the beginning sentence as the sentence topic through their story. The result of this research indicates that the students in Senior High School Bogor can build cohesion and coherence devices on their descriptive paragraphs. It can be seen by the data that five of six types of cohesion devices appeared in their paragraphs, and also all of topical progression were used on their writing. The English teachers have to be competent in evaluating the cohesion and coherence of students writing in order to be better.

Key words : Cohesion, Coherence, and Descriptive Writing

INTRODUCTION

Speaking, writing, reading and listening are four skills in learning English. One of the most important skill in learning English is writing. Harmer (2004) states that writing is a form of communication to deliver or to express feeling through written form. Students can share their feelings, ideas, thoughts, emotions, opinion and information in written by having capability in writing.

However, many students face difficulties in writing. Thus, they are not performing well in English language learning in any countries, particularly

when English is not their first language. Students' capability in writing is still low. There are many cases which students have difficulties in producing good writing. The difficulties are not only in organizing ideas, but also in translating ideas into readable text. Foreigner language writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice and so on.

Almaden (2006) states that a good writing requires unity, coherence, and adequate development, with coherence as the most important factor. The teachers are

required to assist students in generating, organizing, and ordering the content of a text so that the text becomes coherent.

Generally, most students like writing activities, because they can share what in their mind expressively, but several students do not understand a good way to write. It can be seen from the sentences which have been often incoherent and jump in connecting a word into sentences, a sentence into paragraphs, and a paragraph into a discourse. Although they deliver the meaning clearly, and the result of writing is neat, but a written text is required to well-arrangement and if possible without any fault on it. This reason causes error in cohesion and coherence in students' writing. Besides, it may be caused by students' lack of training to use the cohesion and coherence devices, because time for writing is less.

Another problem is that students focus more on the lexical and sentence level rather than on discourse level. Usually, teachers find students using transitional links in their writing without really creating a coherent piece. Almaden (2006) claims that continuity of sense is the foundation of coherence, being the mutual access and relevance within the configuration of concepts and relations. Without continuity, the writing is just plain writing, without making much sense to the reader about the point it makes. Almaden (2006) adds that coherence in writing is achieved when writers are able to successfully establish relationship among the underlying semantic features of a text and its concepts.

In other words, a text must have texture. Halliday and Hasan (1976) say that as a concept, a texture is wholly proper to express the feature of property of being a text. It is what holds the sentences of a text together to make them unity. In

constructing sentences, students need a tie that is called cohesive tie.

Some previous studies related to this, first written by Ayub (2013) indicates that cohesion and coherence have to be the emphasis in teaching writing and the English teachers have to be competent in evaluating the coherence of students' writings by applying TPA. Next is a research written by Ina Nur Hasanah (2017) entitled A Cohesion and Coherence on Students' Exposition Writing finds that the students' have good enough understanding toward building cohesion and coherence within their writing. Based on the explanation above it can be concluded that the research decided to discuss about how the cohesion and coherence of students' writing descriptive paragraphs is.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Writing is one type of communication. Writing could be seen as talking by printed words (Leki, 2007). It means that when we want to interact to other people by writing, it needs to transcript in symbol (letter). According to Kern (2000), writing is a process to develop ability to think explicitly about how to organize and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas in way compatible with wished readers' expectations. While Harmer (2004) says that to deliver from that explain of course we used to practice of express what idea in our mind in the form of list, letter, essay, reports, or novels. He adds when write something, we usually expect somebody to read it. It is easy for us to understand what we have written. Because we already know what we want to say. However, it might be difficult for other people to understand.

From those explanations, the researcher concludes that writing is an activity which expresses knowledge, idea,

and feeling in form of text so that the result can be enjoyed and understood by others.

Element of Writing

Harmer (2004) states the process of writing is typically involves planning what we are going to write, drafting, reviewing and editing what we have written and then producing a final version. Further, Harmer (2004) mentions that the process of writing consists of five stages as follows :

Planning (pre-writing)

Pre-writing is the time to get the brain focused. Pre-writing is the thinking, talking, reading, and writing about topic before write a first draft. It also called a way of warming up before write.

Drafting/Writing

This is actually writing the first draft of the piece. After thinking about topic and doing necessary pre-writing, the next step in the writing process is writing paragraph. When write the first draft of the paragraph, the ideas generated from pre-writing used as a guide.

Revising

It is almost impossible to write a perfect paragraph on the first time. After completing the first draft, a writer must look for ways to improve his writing. This step is called revising. Many students believe that revision is about correcting grammar, spelling and mechanics. While these things are important, revision is primarily concerned with making the ideas clearer. Revision might call for the writer to eliminate sentences, paragraphs or even pages. The draft is just an attempt, but revision is the effort to make sense of the writing.

Editing

The editing stage is different from revision, and needs to be done after revising. Editing involves the close-up view of individual sentences and words. It needs to be done after a writer made revision on a big scale; or else a writer could agonize over a perfect sentence, only to end up cutting that whole paragraph from your piece.

Publishing

Publishing goes beyond getting a piece in a magazine or newspaper. Publishing means getting a piece into the hands of any reader. It means getting a friend or teacher or parents to read a piece is publishing. By knowing that others will read a piece, a writer will work harder to make certain the piece reaches in highest possible potential.

Descriptive Text

Description in writing is the process of creating visual images and sensory impression through words. Wardiman et al. (2008) defines that descriptive text is a part of factual genres. Its social function is to describe a particular person, place or thing.

Further, Wardiman et al. (2008) explains that descriptions are divided into two categories; objectives and subjectives. In objective description, the writer records details without making any personal evaluation or reaction. While in subjective description, the writer are free to interpret the details for the readers; reaction and description can be emotional and value-looked.

A good description is a word picture; the reader can imagine the object, place or person in his or her mind (Oshima and Hogue, 2007). The aims of descriptive writing is to involve the reader in the story as much as possible. Savage and Mayer (2005) states that good descriptive makes

the reader feels as if he or she is present in the scene.

Cohesion

In the study of language, there are two interesting things that are crucial toward language itself; those are the components of language and the way language is used. As language users, we have to know that language cannot be released of the aspect of linguistic form and structure (Yule, 1985). In line with language, text must have certain structure that depends on some requirements. It is not only characterized by its size or length. We need to understand the grammar and there are some factors related those requirements. Some of those factors are describes in term of cohesion.

The term of cohesion is familiar in the study of language because the representation of cohesion processes in a text is important. It can be concluded because cohesion is necessary component of a text.

According to Meyer (2009), cohesion is sequences processes that give a connection between clauses. In other words, cohesion is the grammatical and lexical linking within a text or sentence that holds a text together and gives it meaning. Thus, Yule (1985) defines cohesion as a ties and connections which exist within text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define that cohesion is divided into two types; *Grammatical Cohesion* and *Lexical Cohesion*. Further explanation:

Grammatical Cohesion Devices

Halliday and Hasan as cited in Mulyana (2005) provide the grammatical cohesion of basic categories are pointing into four categories and called as reference,

substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. *First*, Reference is a part of grammatical cohesion relating the use of word or words to appoint word or words or other grammatical units. It is divided into 3 types, they are; personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. *Second*, Substitution is the replacement of a word or element in a sentence with a particular word on lexicogrammatical level. Halliday and Hasan (1976) say that substitution is word relation, not meaning. Hence, substitution occurs on grammar and vocabulary level. In English, substitution may function as a noun, a verb, or a clause. Futher, Halliday and Hasan (1976) devide substitution into three parts; nominal substitution, verbal substitution, and clausal substitution.

Third, Ellipsis is omitting information that has been given in the previous sentence. It is releasing of a word or part of sentence. It is normally required by the grammar which the speaker/writer assumes are obvious from the context and therefore need to be raised. Basically, there are similarity process between ellipsis and substitution; hence, ellipsis could be called *substitution by zero*. Those called similarity process because both of ellipsis and substitution are regarding replacing the element of language, but ellipsis is replacing none things. Ellipsis has three types; nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis. *Fourth*, Conjunction is concerning between sentences in order has the whole idea and harmony. To prove that conjunction as part of cohesive device, the focus is not only on grammar of language and relation of semantic, but their certain aspect. Conjunction usually uses by the writer to ease the interpretation of the text, frequently by signalling a relationship between segments of the discourse.

Conjunction is divided into four types: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal.

Lexical Cohesion Devices

Halliday and Hasan (1976) say that lexical cohesion does not deal with grammatical and semantic connections but with connections based on the word used. Lexical cohesion divided into two types: reiteration and collocation. *First*, Reiteration is a part of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item, that is, the use of the general word to refer back to a lexical item and a number of things in the using of a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate. In general, reiteration is divided into following four types: **Repetition** is the repetition of words or word phrases occurred within the text. **Synonym** is the repeating word by using another word that has the same meaning or almost the same. **Superordinate** refers the name of a more general class. General word can be general nouns, as in 'thing', 'stuff', 'place', 'person', 'women' and 'men', or general verbs, as in 'do' and 'happen'. *Second*, Collocation is regular combination of words in which to fulfill the meaning, these words must occur together such as *fast food* instead of *quick food* and *powerful engine* instead of *strong engine*. Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that collocation is the various lexical relations that do not depend on referential identity and not of the form of reiteration accompanied by *the* or *demonstrative*. In other words, collocation is certain word that can only occur with certain word.

Coherence

To make a perfect text, the text must not only be cohesive, but also must be coherent. All of the text component parts must fit together in a manner that is recognizeable to the readers. According to

Dirven & Verspoor (2004), coherence is the property that distinguishes texts from arbitrary sets of sentences. A text is called coherent if it is possible to construct a coherent representation of that text. Zemach & Rumisek (2005) describe that coherence is the arrangement of ideas in a clear and logical way. When a text is unified and coherent, the reader can understand the main point easily. In conclusion, coherence is a linkage between words or sentences in the text so that readers can easily understand the message contained in the text.

Types of coherence according to expert, Kehler (2002) divides coherence into three relations, namely *Resemblance*, *Cause-Effect*, and *Contiguity*.

Resemblance Relations

Kehler (2002) states that resemblance requires that commonalities and contrasts among corresponding sets of entities and relations be recognized. There are six types of resemblance relations, they are *parallel*, *contrast*, *exemplification*, *generalization*, *exception*, and *elaboration*.

Cause-Effect Relations

According to Kehler (2002), establishing a Cause-Effect relation requires that a path of implication be identified between the propositions denoted by the utterance in a passage. Furthermore, he mentions four types of cause-effect relations, such as *result*, *explanation*, *violated expectation*, and *denial of preventer*. The example of cause-effect is also written by Maria Taboada (2004).

Contiguity Relations

Kehler (2002) states that occasion allows one to express a situation centered on a system of entities by using intermediate

states of affairs as points of connection between partial descriptions of that situation. However, Kehler places only one relation in this category.

Example : *George picked up the speech. He began to read.*

Topical Structure Analysis

There are many ways in analyzing coherent text. One of the way that used for this research is Topical Structure Analysis (TSA) which proposed by Lautamatti (1987). TSA involves an analysis of the coherence derived by an examination of the internal topical structure of paragraphs by repetition of key words and ideas. In writing, TPA is expected that sentences are arranged according to a sequence that would make all the ideas in a paragraph related one to another.

Lautamatti (1987) describes the three basic sentence elements that play a role in TSA, first is initial sentence element which refers to initially placed discourse material in sentences, whatever its type or form. It is what comes first in a sentence. Second element is mood subject which is the grammatical subject of the sentence. Third is topical subject. It refers to the idea being discussed in the sentence and may or may not be the mood subject.

In TPA, Lautamatti conducted an analysis based on three kinds of progression, they are parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended progression. *First*, Parallel progression would be determined if the topics in a number of successive sentences were the same, producing a repetition of topic that reinforced the idea of the writer. *Second*, Sequential progression would be determined if the topics of successive sentences was always different, as they comment one sentence became, or was used to derive the topic of the next. *Third*,

Extended parallel progression was determined if the last topics of each of text were the same but were interrupted with some sequential progression.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method was used in this research to analyse the cohesion and coherence of students' writing descriptive paragraphs. The setting of the research was taken from senior high school in Bogor. 30 students were taken randomly as the sample.

In qualitative research, the key instrument was the writer him or herself (Sugiyono, 2011). Instrument as a tool for collecting data plays a very significant role. Thus, constructing research instrument carefully and in an appropriate manner is greatly fundamental. Research instrument may be in the form of test, questionnaire, observation sheet, document analysis, records of interview and interview sheet, test, etc. Although many instruments are available, but in this research, the research used test as the instrument. In this case, students were asked to write descriptive paragraphs.

To obtain the data accurately for this research, the researcher did some procedures. Firstly, the research made sure that all of students had learned about descriptive text. Then, the research held a written test and asked the students to make descriptive paragraphs wich is 'country' as their topic of paragraph. The test was aimed to find the types of cohesion and coherence on their writing. Then, the researcher collected their worksheet after they finish the test. Lastly, after collecting students' worksheet, the researcher analyzed the data to find cohesion and coherence.

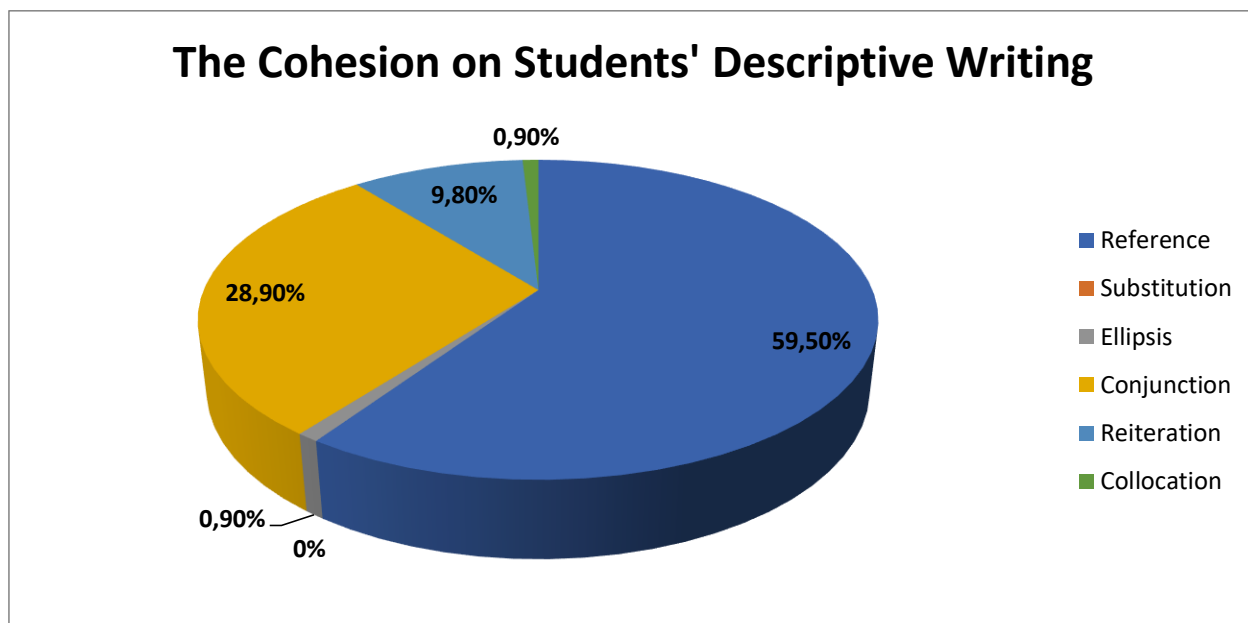
FINDINGS

Cohesion

The researcher did the recapitulation tables of cohesion on students' descriptive

writing based of Halliday and Hasan's concept .The concept was used to know the cohesiveness of the text. The recapitulation can be presented in the chart below:

Chart 1
The Percentage of Cohesion



The chart above identified percentage for two types of cohesion, namely grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. From the chart above, the students could build grammatical cohesion that consisted of *reference* as much as 59.5%, *substitution* 0%, *ellipsis* 0.9%, and *conjunction* 28.9%. While lexical cohesion that consisted of *reiteration* as much as 9.8% and *collocation* 0.9%.

As described in chapter II before, the analysis was done through two aspects of cohesion, they were grammatical and lexical cohesion. These were the analysis of students' descriptive writing.

Grammatical Cohesion

This section explained the grammatical cohesion devices occurred in students'

descriptive writing. The explanation would be described as follows:

Reference

Three references were found: *first*, Personal Reference, Generally, the cohesion devices that occurred in the text is reference. Personal reference elements that occur in the text are personal pronoun as subject *I, he, we*, and as object *them, us*, and possessive adjective *my, your, our*, and *their*. Here, one of the examples of personal reference. *Second*, Demonstrative reference elements that appeared in the text are neutral demonstrative reference represented by definite article *the*, the selected participant demonstratives *this, these, that, those* and the circumstance

selective demonstrative *there*. Here, one of the examples of demonstrative reference. *Third*, comparative reference elements that occurred in the text are particular comparison through numerative *more*, epithet *largest*, *darker*, *wider*, and *oldest* and general comparison through identity *more* and *different*.

Substitution

Substitution consisted of 3 types, nominal substitution, verbal substitution, and causal substitution. Unfortunately, there was no substitution items found in the text.

Ellipsis

The ellipsis elements that occurred in the text deictic *both*. But, it occurred on very little quantity.

Conjunction

First, Additive conjunction items that occurred in the text are *and*, *also*, *besides*, *for instance* and *for example*. Second, Adversative conjunction that appeared in the text are *but* and *however*. Third, Causal Conjunction that appeared in the text are *so*, *because*, and *then*. Fourth, Temporal Conjunction that appeared in the text is only *then*. The presupposing sentence is temporally cohesion because it stood in time relation to the presupposed sentences through the component *then*.

Lexical Cohesion

This section explained the lexical cohesion devices occurred in students' descriptive writing. The explanation would be described as follows:

Reiteration

There were four types of reiteration elements, they are repetition, synonym,

superordiante, and general words. The reiteration elements that found in students' writing were only repetition, synonym, and general words, while superordinate was not found in the text. First, Repetition is the most common form that found in the text was repetition. The repetition items existed in the text that make it cohesive were name of place and noun repetition. Second, Synonym that occurred in the sentence was only word that has identical meaning with other word. The synonym above was between *tanned* and *darker*. Third, General words that occurred in the text is general words of noun.

Collocation

The second types of lexical cohesion was collocation. Here, one of the examples of collocation that appeared in sentence :

S.14 : As Korean **dramas**, **film** and **music** reach a wider audience abroad, more and more visitors are coming to Seoul

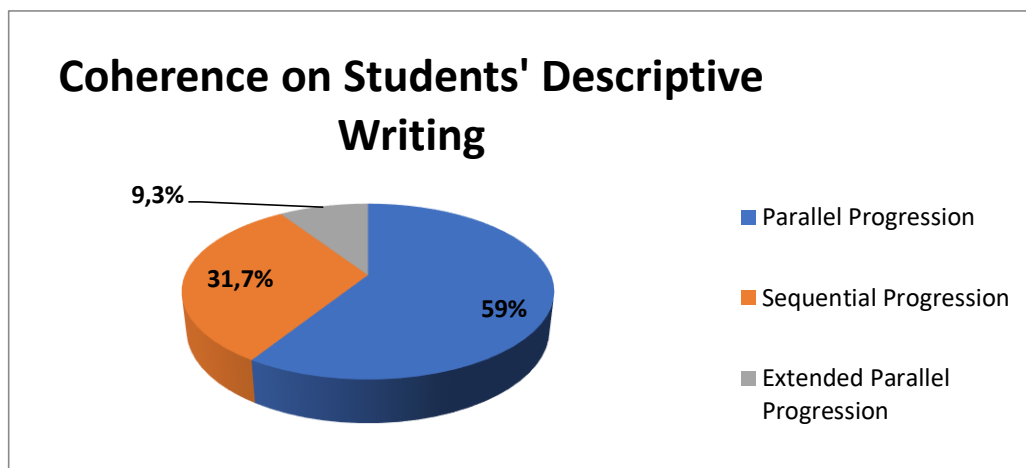
The example above was a *pair of words drawn from the same series*.

In conclusion, students' writing were cohesive, although there were some cohesion items that were invented in the concept but they did not appear in the data. The cohesion items that did not appear in the text was *substitution*. Yet, the cohesiveness of the texts was still maintained with the appearance of the other cohesion devices.

Coherence

The writer did the recapitulation tables of coherence on students' descriptive writing based of Lautamatti's concept. The concept was used to know the cohesiveness of the text. The recapitulation can be presented in the chart below:

Chart 2
The Percentage of Coherence



The chart above identified students' coherence. From the chart above, *Parallel Progression* was the most preferred pattern of topical structure analysis in students' writing with 59.1%. Second was *Sequential Progression* with 31.7%. The last was *Extended Parallel Progression* with 9.2%

As discussed in Chapter II, *Parallel Progression* was the sequence of sentences in which the topical subjects were semantically the same. *Sequential Progression* was the sequence where the topical subject of the successive sentence derived from the rhematic part of the preceding sentence. And *Extended Parallel Progression* was a *parallel progression* that was temporally interrupted by *sequential progression* or *parallel progression* of different sub-topics. Among the thirty writing that analyzed in this research, all types of progression were found. The following was the example of students writing showing how they employed the three progressions.

Parallel Progression

The following text was student's 15 descriptive paragraph, and the researcher

analyzed every *parallel progression* occurred in the paragraph.

(1) South Korea is well-known for its entertainment products like K-Pop, dramas and video games.(2) Seoul, as the capital and largest metropolis of South Korea, is a **place full of glories**.(3) I believe that **it** is due to the influence of Hallyu.(4) Maybe you will wonder what **Hallyu** is.(5) **It's** talking about the popular music and dramas made in South Korea.(6) **Fans of Hallyu** can understand culture of South Korea through the products of Hallyu.(7) **Some of them** will even go to learn Korean for the sake of convenience when they are watching the K-dramas.(8) **Devotees of K-dramas** want to visit those places where the characters meet and live.(9) **South Korea** is a place where it worth people to travel to.(10) **It's** warm and beautiful place that full of dreams and miracle.

Sequential Progression

The following text was student's 5 descriptive writing, and the researcher analyzed every *sequential progression* occurred in the text.

(1) Indonesia is one of the Southeast Asian States. (2) The capital city is Jakarta. (3) The flag is red and white. (4) The language is Bahasa Indonesia. (5) The national song is *Indonesia Raya* created by W. R. Supratman. (6) The motto is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, it means 'Although we have many differences but we are one.' (7) Indonesia is a big country. (8) It is an archipelago. (9) It has 1,904,569 km square. (10) There are **big 5 islands**, Java, Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. (11) **Indonesia** is Republic. (12) **The country** is managed by a president. (13) **Indonesia** has many tourist destinations from Sabang to Merauke. (14) Bali island is one of the beautiful and amazing places in Indonesia. (15) There are many **attractive tourist destinations** there, such as Kuta Beach, Tanah Lot, Nusa Dua, etc. (16) In **Papua**, there is also a gorgeous place called Raja Ampat. (17) Indonesia has many traditional food. (18) One of the popular food in Indonesia is Rendang. (19) Rendang is a spicy meat dish which originated from Padang, West Sumatera. (20) In 2011, an online poll of 35,000 people by CNN international choose rendang as the number one dish of their 'world's 50 most delicious foods list.' (21) So, that's all about Indonesia.

From the text above, four cases of sequential progression were found in the text. All of them had similar cases. The first case (sentence 10 – 11), the discussion introduced different topic, *big 5 islands* and *Indonesia*. The second case (sentence 12 – 13), the discussion also introduced different topic, *the country* and *Indonesia*. The third case (sentence 15 – 16), the discussion introduced different topic, *tourist destination* and *Papua*. The last case (sentence 16 – 17), the discussion

introduced different topic, *Papua* and *Indonesia*.

Extended Parallel Progression

The following text was student's 13 descriptive paragraph, and the researcher analyzed every *extended parallel progression* occurred in the text.

(1) **Singapore is a famous country.** (2) Let me tell you about Singapore. (3) Singapore is an island city. (4) Its population is about three millions people. (5) Most Singaporeans live in high-rise apartments. (6) Singapore is a beautiful city with lots of parks and open spaces. (7) It also a very clean city. (8) The business district is very modern, with lots of tall and new building. (9) Now, let me tell you about the old section of the city. (10) In Chinatown, there are rows of old shop house. (11) The government buildings in Singapore are also very unique and antique. (12) They date from the British colonial days. (13) Shopping! (14) This is the part that I like very much. (15) **Singapore is famous** for its many good shopping centers. (16) It is a heaven for shoppers. (17) Well, since Singapore lies near the equatorial line, of course, it has tropical climate with a nice weather in both dry and rainy seasons. (18) I love to travel to Singapore.

Only one case of extended parallel progression was found in the text. It occurred in sentence 15 covering fifteen sentences (sentence 1 – 15), was extended parallel progression of the topical subject *Singapore is a famous country* that was mentioned earlier in sentence 1.

DISCUSSIONS

First, based on the data analysis of cohesion above, it assumed that all of the

students can build all of cohesion devices on their descriptive paragraph, except substitution. The most important thing was that students' ability in building cohesion influenced their writing quality. When students wrote a text cohesively, the text would be easy to read and to understand because the elements in text were linked. Therefore, cohesion provided strong evidence that contributed to readable writing. But, the fact showed that the sentences in the text should not be connected by the existence of all cohesion devices. It can be seen that *ellipsis* and *collocation* found in very little quantity, while there was no *substitution* found in all of students' writing.

Second, based on the data analysis of coherence above, it can be assumed that students were quite skillful in building coherence. Same as cohesion, students' ability in building coherence also influenced their writing quality. When the students' wrote a text coherently, the idea of the text will be easy to catch and sentence by sentence in text related to each other. Therefore, the readers will get meaning of the paragraph completely. It can be concluded that coherence is one of the important elements of writing that should be emphasized in writing.

From the discussion above can be concluded that students' writing ability were good. It could be seen from progression appeared in each sentences. It could be sum up that cohesion and coherence were important elements of good writing.

CONCLUSION

Cohesion and coherence were the important elements for a good writing. They were certainly important to the linkage between reader and writer in readable writing. Besides, they were important element that should be included

in teaching of writing activity. Some suggestions are offered, Teachers need to evaluate students' writing, give more explanation about cohesion and coherence, give understanding that students need continuous in writing, also conduct special supervision during writing. Then, based on the result it is also suggested to the next researcher, they can explore more about teacher perceptions toward teaching learning activity in building cohesion and coherence.

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